

### Build awareness

Employees and customers alike notice when a company demonstrates its awareness of and sensitivity to people who have disabilities. In fact, 93% of the population would prefer to give their business to companies that hire people with disabilities.

Developing disability awareness can cultivate a culture that is geared toward growth and opportunity for all employees, increasing productivity, enhancing morale, and building innovation.

- Prepare employees with enough diversity and disability awareness to represent your business appropriately in all circumstances.
- Provide employees with tip sheets that give basic information about disabilities awareness and etiquette. Give employees bits and pieces of information over time, in newsletters, company events, in meetings.

### Promote and practice inclusive etiquette

Proper etiquette improves effective communication in the workplace, enhances team performance, increases employee participation in business growth. The following guidelines are examples of best etiquette practices when interacting with people who have disabilities.

- Extend common courtesies like shaking hands or exchanging business cards. If the individual cannot shake your hand or grasp the card, he or she will tell you and direct where you may place the card.
- If the person has a speech impairment, and you are having difficulty understanding what he or she is saying, ask the individual to repeat, rather than pretend to understand.
- If you believe that an individual needs assistance, go ahead and offer, but wait for your offer to be accepted before you try to help.
- If you are speaking to a person who is blind, be sure to identify yourself at the beginning of the conversation and announce when you are leaving.
- If you wish to get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person gently on the arm. Look directly at the person, and speak clearly in a normal tone of voice.
- If you encounter an individual with a service animal, do not touch or distract the animal.
- Never touch a person's assistive device. It is part of their personal space.
- If a person uses an interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.



For more links to online etiquette guides, visit the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) website at [www.jan.org](http://www.jan.org) and use keywords 'disability awareness' or 'etiquette'

### **Prepare employees for success**

All employees appreciate the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skill. Providing training opportunities for all employees engages them in organizational goals overall, improving productivity and profit.

### **Ensure training is inclusive, when necessary**

Give employees who have disabilities an equal chance to benefit from training, including management and leadership training and specific skills training. Most employees who have disabilities will need no accommodations to participate effectively in training. For those who do, training may need to be adjusted to accommodate specific needs.

- Materials electronically or other accessible format for persons who are visually impaired.
- Interpreters for participants who use sign language.
- Real-time captioning for those who are hearing-impaired.
- Accessible facilities for those who use assistive mobility devices.

### **Etiquette training creates an inclusive environment**

Co-workers will benefit from etiquette and disability education that makes them aware of differences, and promotes effective, comfortable communication. Training topics might include:

- Communicating with coworkers and customers who have disabilities.
- Appropriate and inappropriate terminology.
- Specific disabilities affecting mobility, vision, hearing, as well as those that are hidden.
- How to act around service animals.

### **Train managers for optimal performance**

Managers benefit from training about managing a diverse workforce.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act overview.
- How to manage conflicts related to a disability.
- Introduction to universal design and inclusion.
- Improved team performance through inclusion and universal design.
- Emergency evacuation procedures.
- Assistive technologies overview.